



April 11, 2016

Phyllis Reed
Darrington Ranger District
1405 Emens Ave. N.
Darrington, WA 98241

RE: Proposed Segelsen Thin and Clear Creek Riparian Restoration Project

Dear Phyllis Reed:

The undersigned climbing organizations support the proposed Segelsen Thin and Clear Creek Riparian Restoration Project, especially as it relates to recreation and rock climbing opportunities in the area. We appreciate this collaborative effort to bring together stakeholders from the local Darrington community, the conservation community, timber industry, youth education, and public agencies with the shared goals of increasing ecologically sustainable timber harvest under the Northwest Forest Plan on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in the Darrington vicinity while improving the ecological functioning of our forests and watersheds.

Climbing Organizations

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, The Mountaineers, and the Washington Climbers Coalition are national and Washington State-based climbing organizations dedicated to climbing access, conservation, and advocating for local climbers. Together, our organizations represent, educate, and mobilize over 20,000 climbers in Washington State. Our organizations have a long history of working with the US Forest Service to steward the Eightmile Creek trail and promoting the recreation economy in Darrington. Climbers have been involved in preserving public lands and volunteering to take care of the places where climbing takes place throughout the State. For more information about our organizations, see accessfund.org, americanalpineclub.org, mountaineers.org, and washingtonclimbers.org.

The Climbing Resources

The Clear Creek Road (Forest Road 2060) serves one of Washington's most historic climbing areas and we believe that public recreational access in this area has and can continue to contribute to the economic health of local communities, public awareness and enthusiasm for the wildness of the North Cascades, and general public health.

Clear Creek and Squire Creek, south of Darrington, are home to a remarkable collection of granite domes that have drawn climbers since the area was first explored by climbing icon Fred Beckey in 1969 when Beckey and party climbed "Witch Doctor Wall." 5.5 miles up from the Mountain



Loop Highway, the Eightmile Creek trail begins at a trailhead on the right fork of Clear Creek Road, or Forest Road 2065. The trail serves a popular climbing destination called “Three O’Clock Rock,” which has drawn climbers since 1971. Forest Road 2065 is drivable for at least 2 miles beyond the fork, and while classified as Basic Custodial Care and not maintained beyond the Eightmile Creek trailhead, provides access to additional climbing destinations in Copper Creek. One of the area’s most famous climbs, “Dreamer,” established in 1979, lies in the headwaters of Copper Creek. This creek valley draws history buffs and mining enthusiasts interested in visiting an old mining camp and the Bornite Mine, near the headwaters of Copper Creek below Windy Pass. As public resources that deserve public access, our organizations support maintenance of this road.

Forest Road 2060 continues up the left fork at about 5 miles from the Mountain Loop Highway, crosses Clear Creek shortly beyond, and then passes beneath Exfoliation Dome, a steep fin of rock that has been called “the most difficult 4,000’ summit in Washington.” The road is in good condition about 1-1.5 miles beyond the fork, and this road provides access to climbs on the Dome as well as views of the majestic Clear Creek and Copper Creek valleys. There is dispersed camping activity here which has been a public asset over the years. The undersigned climbing organizations support maintenance of this road to the climbers’ access routes.

Climbers have been proud volunteers in Clear Creek and other climbing areas around the State for decades. We’ve been undertaking volunteer trail projects on an annual or biannual basis since 1999, and we’ve been doing volunteer maintenance on the Clear Creek Road for over six years.

Proposed Stewardship Project Support

The proposed Clear Creek Riparian Restoration Project is a good example of how sustainable timber harvest can improve aquatic, riparian, and forest health. The broad stakeholder involvement and Collaborative will also ensure that the proposed sustainable timber harvest and thinning is consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan and is a win-win for the local economy and conservation. While we recognize that the primary purpose of the stewardship project on this road would be to address water quality issues, the project provides an obvious secondary benefit for continued public access to these important resources represented on the recently published Destination Darrington map.

We thank the Darrington Ranger District and the Collaborative for their efforts over the years and we hope to continue to enjoy the privilege of spending time in this remarkable area. We believe that public recreational access is good for local residents and visitors alike, and that public visitation will increase awareness and support for ongoing stewardship and protection of these vital resources. A successful demonstration project like that currently proposed by the Darrington Collaborative could be, and we hope it will be, a template for future efforts.



Sincerely,

Joe Sambataro
Northwest Regional Director
Access Fund

Katherine Hollis
Conservation & Recreation Manager
The Mountaineers

Eddie Espinosa
Western States Manager
American Alpine Club

Matt Perkins
Secretary/Treasurer
Washington Climbers Coalition